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PRMPA

By: KW NARA, Date 5-6-02

Telecon

The President and Mr. Kissinger

March 11, 1969 - approx 10:00 p.m.

HAK - When he met with Dobrynin this evening, he gave him the note from the President to Kosygin on the occasion of the latter's 65th birthday. Dobrynin gave K a copy of the note they gave to the Germans on the non-proliferation treaty, noting the German concerns. He said it would be easy for us to recommend the NPT to the Germans. K will have it analyzed tomorrow -- one thing being to see whether the Germans gave it to us or whether it came from the Russians. Dobrynin wanted to talk about his conversation with Rogers on Saturday. He was elated -- said it was an enormous shift in our position. K told him there was trouble with the language concerning the move on the meetings; said our feeling was not to do it right away. Dobrynin said it would be hard to climb off it.

HAK said he saw a radio report in which Hanoi allegedly said they would only do the private talks in groups of 4, which is the opposite of what they told us on Saturday. Dobrynin gave a long explanation of why he thought they wanted 4. K told him what the President said -- 'that he was patient, but that he was determined to end the war.' K told Dobrynin that the peace talks/Vietnam and the Middle East were our two big items; that if those were solved, we didn't see what else could concern us. We have no problem with Berlin.

Dobrynin asked what we were doing about the ABM; if anything had been announced. K said no; there were a lot of technical reasons having to do with other events. K told the Pres. what may happen now is that Hanoi may not accept the two-power talks as they indicated on Saturday they would. K thinks we should offer the 2-power talk and, if they refuse, then we should let it sit for another week or two. We should see if we can get Saigon to come along on the 4-power talks as long as military subjects only are discussed.

Pres -- Does Saigon know about the 4-power talks?

K -- State only sent it over today, and it is in Pres' office to look over. We have to clear the 2-power talks with Saigon also. Don't think we should make the 4-power to them now. Habib says to go with the 2-power discussion first. It is conceivable they will not want us to go 2-power which would enable us to climb off that.

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K (Cont'd)

Saigon may want to be present.

Pres. -- Saigon may want to be present at any talks on the other side.

K -- They will certainly not want us to discuss political subjects.

Pres -- It's a case of our having agreed to it.

K -- I told Dobrynin we hadn't. It will be hard to get the negotiators to go back to something they have already considered. We have to see how this develops. To the Pres: If you agree, we can let this cable to Saigon and Paris go. I have made some changes which are marked on your copy. If you approve, we can then send it out and see early next week whether they will agree to two-power talks. We told Paris and Saigon they can ask for a private meeting if there is no further shelling this week. In the meantime, Bunker will talk to Thuy and get his agreement. On Monday, Lodge will ask for a 2-power meeting around Wednesday. Then we will find out if they still go along with what they said on Saturday, or if they will say 4-power. If we don't meet on a 2-power basis, then we will have a decision to make.

Pres -- I wonder if Hanoi would want to have 4-power talks with the NLF there?

K -- Two-power talks would have been advantageous to us -- it would have split up the NLF and Hanoi. Dobrynin said it was though for them by putting their ally into the same room with Saigon and recognizing the NLF. But that was what they agreed to last Saturday. K is running down the radio report to see if it is accurate. We at least have to plan for the situation of their not agreeing to private 2-power talks. Habib said he would call Lodge today and tell him not to do anything until he (Habib) got back. Habib will do exactly what the President told him, per his conversation with K.

K -- If we get into 2-power talks, we can hold the line with them. If they want 4-power private talks, then we have a problem -- a Saigon problem and a State Department problem. It is clear the State Department is eager to talk on any forum. Saigon certainly will not talk political subjects. On the political side, we have to be very careful in light of what the President told Ky in their conversation. We have to be careful the Department doesn't turn itself loose again.

Pres -- I assured Ky they could trust us.

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cable could be cleared tomorrow; that he looked it over carefully and corrected sentences which might give us trouble. K outlined, in response to query from Pres, that State sends its cables on Vietnam matters to us for checking. If K disagrees, he would take it to the President -- this is a standard procedure in effect for 10 years, and is the case for most major policy matters. Usually, if it is a major issue, K goes to the President and asks for his decision.

Pres. -- I will look at it in the morning. Have a feeling about this thing.... the real nut might be in not figuring adequately for Saigon.

K -- We don't want him to crack that nut because that always happens. We make a tough proposition and then we go to work on them. It was one thing for them to outlast the outgoing Administration. Dobrynin made no secret -- they are hoping in a big forum that we will be able to get Saigon to agree to a political settlement.

Pres -- What has happened is basically Bill has gotten together with Walsh and that may explain what Bill said about running the negotiation. Think, too, that Lodge, with Habib needing him, will stay fairly firm. He pretty well knows where the power is.

K -- The only problem is whether we can get Hanoi to give in again. We had it practically set up. Lodge and Habib will hold the fort for whatever direction the President wishes. Habib clearly understood what the President wanted.

Pres -- I was clear on the fact that we can't twist Saigon's arm. Habib felt that way, too -- it wasn't necessary to convince him. I wonder if he can't go back and talk to Rogers some on this to set him straight.

K -- Habib told me he could tell Rogers he saw you and got a rundown on what you said to Thui -- but not go beyond that.

Pres -- I noted a newspaper headline there is increased enemy activity in the area of Saigon and they expect a third offensive. How do you value that?

K -- I didn't believe that the last attack would be a major attempt against Saigon, but that was because I thought they wouldn't want

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to risk an attack on the north. Maybe they think we won't attack the north. If they launch a major offensive, we should then hit their headquarters in the Third Corps.

K -- Dobrynin asked how we evaluated that Chinese clash. I told him we think it is their problem. We don't presume to give them advice. We won't play any little games. We try to settle things, but if threatened, we will do what we have to. Obviously, this is much on their minds.

Pres -- Sometimes events which we could not have foreseen may have some helpful effect -- who knows.

K -- If one evaluates accounts of events, we gained more from that clash than we lost through Saturday's conversation.

Pres -- It must have shook the North Vietnamese.

K -- It must be a warning to Hanoi it can happen again.

Pres -- On another subject, I had an interesting time listening to some of the Congressmen and Senators tonight -- I will talk about that tomorrow. Is Packard doing more for us on the ABM?

K -- He made a proposal to us. I am putting together a package so you can see the pros and cons of each. Packard says we could conceivably sell the concept if we continue the R&D and buy the sites we need for \$30 million, and begin construction on two sites at \$800 million. We would get the deployment battle behind us.

Pres -- We could call these basically prototypes.

K -- That isn't so easy. You can't move on until you have tried them if they are called prototypes, and we won't be finished until 1972.

Pres -- They have been affected by the basic question of 'will it work?' Some said the real problem they have is they hate to be divided by this issue at this time. Can we find something that will divide them just a little less?

K -- told the President about the three scientists who visited him, and said there is nothing we can do to get them around. It isn't the money -- everyone agrees with money. The R&D is signal

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to everyone -- a face-saving way out of the program. No one will believe the program will continue... Everybody opposed says continue it by doing R&D.

Pres -- I say, if we just do R&D and everybody opposed says ok, I don't want them to win that much. Could we say: we are going to do R&D but not order full deployment. We are going forward on a limited basis until we get farther along on R&D.

K -- 'We are doing it to give it a chance to gear it to the Soviet military capability.

Pres. We won't go forward; the extent to which we further deploy will depend on the Soviets.

K -- This will give us a chance to test out the components.

Pres -- I could sell that language.

K -- I've been thinking that too.

Pres -- Lay it out for the people who are for it and give them enough to fight for it.

K -- with regard to the scientists, it is a question of whether they are willing to have the country defenseless. In any event, no serious person will claim it can threaten the Soviet Union. We should go ahead with the radar, buy the sites, and start on Spartans (?). Two sites will test out the system and defend a few Minuteman Missiles.

Pres -- Whether we defend more will depend on the growth of the Soviet Union missile capability and what they do. That is closer to what's sellable. We don't need to try to sell the scientists.

K -- I looked at the panel DuBridge set up for the ABM. Everybody on it had published articles before they joined the panel.

Pres -- What is your present inclination -- to go Friday?

K -- The main thing is to go right -- but have you feel you have explored this thing completely.

Pres -- There are no problems with delays?

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K -- No, we can even go with it Monday or Tuesday.

Pres -- They will squeal all weekend. We can say we are examining it; they will think we are being thoughtful. I am not going to talk to a lot of people in State or Disarmament. I think tomorrow, I will have a 1/2 dozen House and Senate people over ostensibly for a political meeting. I will include Scott and Morton who will be the new chairman; also Bryce Harlow; and ask them how they feel about all of this. Dirksen said he would call Packard. Incidentally, what you just described was what Dirksen was feeling for. We have to get to the hawks also, like Mendel Rivers. We don't know what they are against.

K -- Until recently, they had to be against the old system.

Pres -- But the new system has leaked and they are fighting it.

K -- Most scientists don't want any defensive system. In the early 50's, they were for air defense, the H-Bomb, shelters, etc.

Pres -- This will have an impact on the Soviets. It will be susceptible to very significant expansion if we want to do so.

K -- advised the Pres that the NSC meeting had been moved to Saturday.

President said he didn't think he would bring it before the NSC again; that he has to decide it, and that is it.

K -- I think Rogers will not fight it -- he will go along even with the full one.

Pres -- I have to let Zeigler know by tomorrow noon whether to have a Press Conference Friday. If it is better to go Friday, we will do it; unless we think we will know an awful lot more, I favor moving. The more you wait the more susceptible we are. I don't want us to appear indecisive.

Pres -- Back agin to attacks. I want you to read morning reports of how many cities were shelled and want an analysis. If they are stepping up substantially, I need to know that. I don't think we can allow them to hit on and on and on.

K -- I think we then have to hit. One thing Dobrynin said was "it will be hard for him to take the big step", and I said, "well, that is not that other one, it will

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give them a problem, but we should wait until Laird gets back. There has been some reluctance to let Bunker get back, but I think you should have a chance to talk to him.

Pres -- Reluctance by whom? I would like to talk to him.

K -- He wanted to come back with Laird. They stopped it because they didn't want to create a crisis impression. He might come back next week. Personally, I think there is something to giving a crisis impression.

Pres -- It will be interesting to hear Laird's report because he is no hawk. He wants to get out and he's willing to pay a big price. We must start those meetings among myself, Laird, Rogers and you, and perhaps Wheeler, to hash it out and let each see what the arguments are.